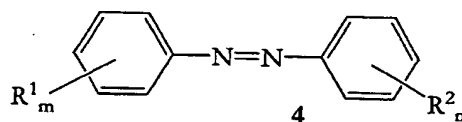


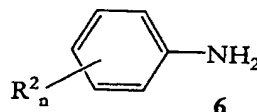
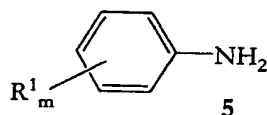
Claims

1. A process for the preparation of an aromatic azo-compound 4



or a salt thereof,

- 5 comprising the step of treating aromatic amino-compounds 5 and 6



with (i) hydrogen peroxide and acetic acid, followed by (ii) conc. sulphuric acid, to yield aromatic azo-compound 4 or a salt thereof, wherein

each m and each n is independently 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, and

- 10 each R¹ and each R² is independently an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, arylalkyl, arylalkenyl, arylalkynyl, alkylaryl, alkenylaryl or alkynylaryl group which may include one or more heteroatoms N, O or S in its carbon skeleton,
-F, -Cl, -Br, -I, -CF₃, -CCl₃, -CBr₃, -CI₃, -OH, -SH, -NH₂, -CN, -NO₂, -COOH,
-R³-O-R⁴, -R³-S-R⁴, -R³-SO-R⁴, -R³-SO₂-R⁴, -R³-SO₂-OR⁴, -R³O-SO₂-R⁴,
15 -R³-SO₂-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-NR⁴-SO₂-R⁴, -R³O-SO₂-OR⁴, -R³O-SO₂-N(R⁴)₂,
-R³-NR⁴-SO₂-OR⁴, -R³-NR⁴-SO₂-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-N(R⁴)₃⁺, -R³-P(R⁴)₂,
-R³-Si(R⁴)₃, -R³-CO-R⁴, -R³-CO-OR⁴, -R³O-CO-R⁴, -R³-CO-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-NR⁴-CO-R⁴,
-R³O-CO-OR⁴, -R³O-CO-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-NR⁴-CO-OR⁴, -R³-NR⁴-CO-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-CS-R⁴,
-R³-CS-OR⁴, -R³O-CS-R⁴, -R³-CS-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-NR⁴-CS-R⁴, -R³O-CS-OR⁴,
20 -R³O-CS-N(R⁴)₂, -R³-NR⁴-CS-OR⁴ or -R³-NR⁴-CS-N(R⁴)₂, all optionally protected,
wherein

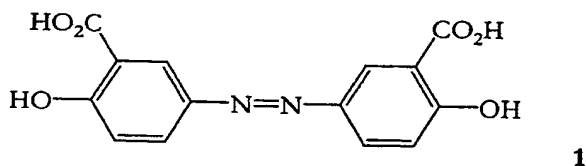
each -R³- is independently a chemical bond, a C₁-C₁₀ alkylene, C₁-C₁₀ alkenylene or C₁-C₁₀ alkynylene group, and

- 25 each -R⁴ is independently hydrogen, unsubstituted C₁-C₆ alkyl or unsubstituted C₆-C₁₀ aryl.

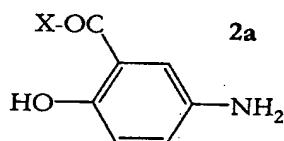
2. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the aromatic amino-compounds 5 and 6 are the same and together form a symmetric aromatic azo-compound 4.

3. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the aromatic amino-compounds 5 and 6 are different and together form an asymmetric aromatic azo-compound 4.

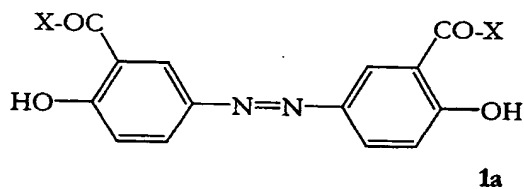
4. A process for the preparation of 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid) 1



or a salt or derivative thereof, comprising the step of treating a 5-amino salicylic acid derivative 2a



or a salt or derivative thereof, with (i) hydrogen peroxide and acetic acid, followed by (ii) conc. sulphuric acid, to yield a 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid derivative) 1a



or a salt or derivative thereof, wherein

X is OR, SR or N(R)₂,

when X is OR or SR, R is independently an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, arylalkyl, arylalkenyl, arylalkynyl, alkylaryl, alkenylaryl or alkynylaryl group which may include one or more heteroatoms N, O or S in its carbon skeleton, hydrogen, -Si(alkyl)₃, or -Sn(alkyl)₃, and

when X is N(R)₂, each R is independently an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, arylalkyl, arylalkenyl, arylalkynyl, alkylaryl, alkenylaryl or alkynylaryl group which may include one or more heteroatoms N, O or S in its carbon skeleton, hydrogen, -SO₂-(aryl), -NH₂, -NH(alkyl) or -NH(aryl), or both R
5 together form an optionally substituted cycloheteroalkyl, cycloheteroalkenyl or heteroaryl group.

5. A process as claimed in claim 4, wherein X is OR and R is an optionally substituted alkyl, aryl or arylalkyl group.

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6. A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein X is OR and R is an unsubstituted alkyl group.

7. A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein X is OR and R is an unsubstituted
15 C₁-C₆ alkyl group.

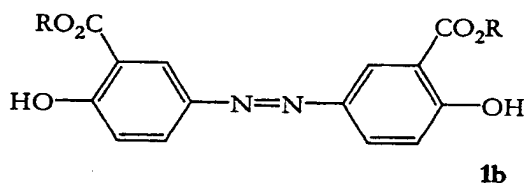
8. A process as claimed in claim 7, wherein X is OR and R is methyl.

9. A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein X is OR and R is an optionally
20 substituted arylalkyl group.

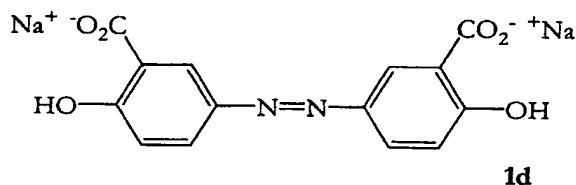
10. A process as claimed in claim 9, wherein X is OR and R is benzyl.

11. A process as claimed in claim 4, further comprising a step of deprotecting
25 the 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid derivative) 1a to yield 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid) 1 or a salt or other derivative thereof.

12. A process as claimed in claim 11, wherein X is OR, and a 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid ester) 1b

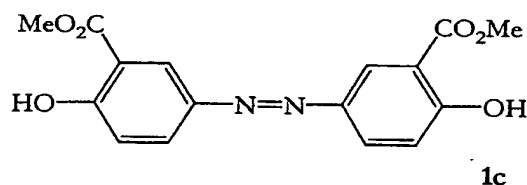


is deprotected with sodium hydroxide to yield the disodium salt **1d** of 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid)

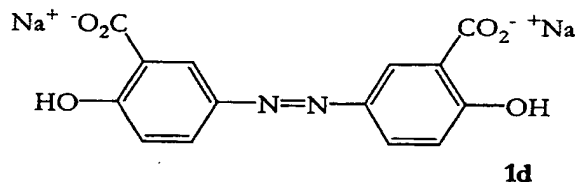


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13. A process as claimed in claim 12, wherein X is OR, both R are methyl, and a dimethyl-3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoate) **1c**



10 is deprotected with sodium hydroxide to yield the disodium salt **1d** of 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid)



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14. 3,3'-Azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid) **1** or a salt or derivative thereof, obtained by a process as claimed in claim 4.

15. Disodium salt **1d** of 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid), obtained by a process as claimed in claim 4.

20 16. A pharmaceutical composition, comprising 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid) **1** or a salt or derivative thereof as claimed in claim 14 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

17. A method of treating an inflammatory disease, comprising administering a pharmaceutically effective amount of 3,3'-azo-bis(6-hydroxybenzoic acid) 1 or a salt or derivative thereof as claimed in claim 14, to a subject in need of such treatment.

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18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the inflammatory disease is ulcerative colitis.